

# VETERANS HEALTH CARE FACILITIES CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today in support of H.R. 2646, as amended, the Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act of 2011. I urge our colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation, which would allow for new construction projects in five States and Puerto Rico and would extend several VA programs, including vital homeless programs.

Last year, Congress passed, and the President signed into law, Public Law 112-10, Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, and provided an advanced appropriation of fiscal year 2012 funding for veterans' health care. Enacting H.R. 2646, as amended, would avoid interruptions in VA programs and would allow VA to use the full amount of funding provided through Public Law 112-10.

VA has worked tirelessly to get veterans off the streets and into housing. Their efforts are commendable, but there is still work to be done. H.R. 2646, as amended, contains critical extensions to many of VA's programs to end homelessness among veterans. This bill would allow VA to continue to operate the drop-in resource centers that help connect homeless veterans to services; provide grants to transitional housing programs for the most vulnerable homeless veterans, such as the frail elderly, terminally ill, women with children, and seriously mentally ill; and continue its street outreach and emergency care services for homeless veterans. These programs are on the front line of VA's services for homeless veterans.

One of the best ways to end veteran homelessness is to prevent it from happening. This bill would support VA's homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing programs by extending the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program, a critical resource for stopping homelessness before it begins. H.R. 2646, as amended, also extends the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program, which helps homeless veterans find and maintain employment. Extending these programs will decrease the number of veterans who may become homeless in these tough economic times.

VA has a long list of construction projects that have yet to be funded. H.R. 2646, as amended, would allow VA to make critical upgrades to its facilities and infrastructure to ensure that we can provide care to veterans in a safe environment. For instance, this bill would allow VA to begin a \$51 million project to seismically strengthen the nursing tower and community living center at the VA Puget Sound Healthcare System in Seattle, WA. Built in 1985, this building does not meet the current seismic code for Washington State. Located in an area of high seismic activity, it is vital that this building be upgraded so that the VA Puget Sound Healthcare System

can continue to deliver world-class healthcare to veterans in a safe environment.

We must allow VA to continue work on projects such as seismic corrections in San Juan, PR; construction of new Polytrauma and Blind Rehabilitation Centers in Palo Alto, CA; medical center improvements and cemetery expansion in St. Louis, MO; and additional parking facilities and nurse education opportunities to ongoing projects in Fayetteville, AR and Orlando, FL, respectively. Additionally, it would authorize VA to lease space for outpatient clinics in Columbus, GA; Fort Wayne, IN; Mobile, AL; Salem, OR; San Jose, CA; South Bend, IN; and Springfield, MO.

This bill helps us honor the legacy of heroic veterans by dedicating VA medical facilities in their names. With the endorsement of every member of the Texas congressional delegation, the West Texas VA Health Center in Big Spring, TX, would be renamed in honor of George H. O'Brien, a hometown hero. With similar support from the Colorado Congressional delegation, the Telehealth Clinic in Craig, CO, would be renamed in honor of MAJ William Edward Adams.

Our Nation's veterans have sacrificed much in their service to this country, we must make sure they receive the care and benefits they earned.

## TRIBUTE TO MIKE DAVIDSON

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I rise to commend and thank Mike Davidson for his decades of extraordinarily dedicated and consequential service to our Nation, most recently as the general counsel for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence over the past 8 years.

Many others have praised the wise, discerning, and sound counsel that has characterized every step of Mike's distinguished career, from his time in the Peace Corps in Kenya in the mid-1960s throughout his decades of service since then: as a litigator for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, as a professor of clinical law at the State University of New York at Buffalo, as chief staff counsel for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, as the first legal counsel of the Senate, and, following his first retirement from the Senate in 1995, as counsel for several important public initiatives—including, most prominently, serving as general counsel for the Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001.

This exceptionally distinguished record speaks for itself, and in 2003 it led me to recruit Mike back to full-time service in the Senate. As the Intelligence Committee's vice chairman at the time, I asked Mike to serve as the committee's minority counsel, a position he held from 2003 through 2006. When I became the committee's chairman in 2007, I asked Mike to undertake

the duties of general counsel. He agreed to take on this role, and he continued to serve me and the committee well throughout the 2 years that I was chairman. After I passed on the gavel to Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN in 2009, Mike stayed on for nearly 3 more years, until his quiet retirement earlier this month.

Throughout this time on the committee, Mike's calm and unflappable presence; his evenhanded, understated, and fair approach to even the most contentious issues; his painstaking attention to detail and unfailing memory; and, above all, his dedication to the law and to the security interests of the United States, have served this committee and our Nation well. Day in and day out, we knew we could rely on Mike's counsel. Whether it was a situation involving routine oversight or a matter of great sensitivity and historical importance—of which there were many during those years, including our investigations into the intelligence regarding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, our efforts to end the CIA's coercive interrogations, our drafting and passing the landmark Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Amendments Act of 2008, among others—Mike Davidson's legal acumen and advice were invariably excellent, and also indispensable to the work of the committee.

My colleagues and I trusted Mike's judgment implicitly. His example of dedicated public service and his exceptional day-to-day performance on the job earned our respect and admiration, and it inspired a generation of staff who had the privilege to work alongside him.

We will miss Mike dearly, but his legacy will remain a part of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence for years to come. We wish him well in his second retirement, even as we leave the light on for him just in case he decides to serve again.

## NATIONAL PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize September as National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. Prostate cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in men. Approximately one in six men will be diagnosed with this disease during their lifetime and it is estimated that over 240,000 men will be diagnosed with and over 33,000 men will die from the disease this year. While no cure has been found, early detection presents our best chance at saving lives. Public awareness of prostate cancer is improving but statistics demonstrate that more can be done to make awareness and early detection of this disease a national priority.

The odds of successfully treating this disease improve with early detection, and health experts recommend that men begin receiving yearly screenings at age 50 or sooner for those men at

high risk for the disease. In fact, studies have found that approximately 98 percent of men diagnosed with early stage prostate cancer are still living 10 years later, while only 18 percent of those diagnosed at advanced stages of the disease survive the first decade. More than 2 million men in the United States who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer at some point in their lives are still alive today. National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month is a reminder that early detection is vital in successfully treating this disease and, through screening, we truly can save lives.

I am proud to add my voice to those who are working to fight prostate cancer, and I take this opportunity to recognize the families, professionals and advocates who work day after day to be a powerful voice for prostate cancer patients. I commend them on their tireless efforts to raise awareness of the risks, to promote early detection and treatment, and to further our efforts to understand and eliminate this disease. I urge all citizens to promote the use of early detection screening tests and to help advance the search for a cure of prostate cancer while supporting those individuals and families who face this devastating disease.

I appreciate this opportunity to increase awareness about the importance of early detection in our efforts to defeat prostate cancer and express my support for those Americans fighting the battle against this disease.

#### CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act, which this Chamber adopted late last night by unanimous consent. The bill demonstrates that improving the lives of vulnerable children remains a national priority. In the midst of deficit panels and continuing resolutions and fear of government shutdown, Congress came together to pass this bipartisan, bicameral legislation and that is illustrative of our concern for the needs of children.

This legislation also reinforces our recognition of the need for flexibility and accountability. We must enable public agencies to be responsible stewards of public funds, manage performance, innovate and enhance their ability to achieve positive outcomes. The underlying law we reauthorized could not be more aptly named: Promoting Safe and Stable Families. I am particularly pleased that this bill continues to stress the importance of kinship care. This is something I know a little bit about. In the 1996 welfare reform bill, I successfully fought for the inclusion of an amendment with, Senator COATS, to ensure that relatives be given preference over stranger caregivers when the state determined where to place a child who had been removed from the

home. Having worked with senior citizens and with the Gray Panthers before I came to Congress, I often heard the frustration of grandparents whose grandchildren—as far as they knew—disappeared into the state child protection system and literally vanished from their families' lives. I realized the immense potential in making it easier for grandparents and other family members to care for children and introduced legislation to recognize that. We ought to have policies that make it easier, instead of more difficult, for families to come together to raise their children. And as we continue to rethink our child welfare system, we need to rededicate ourselves to looking to families, including extended families, for solutions. When children are separated from their parents, it is usually a painful and traumatic experience. Reading over the RECORD from that fight in 1996 reminded me just how far we have come since then to recognize that fact.

The following year, in 1997, other provisions of my kinship bill were included in the Adoptions and Safe Families Act. And subsequent bills passed by this Chamber, including the 2008 Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, furthered our progress promoting kinship care by allowing relative caregivers to receive foster care payments just as a stranger would. We know that sometimes, all the goodness in a grandparent's heart can't buy their grandchild basketball shoes or school books. And I am grateful to Senators BAUCUS and HATCH for continuing to draw attention to the value of kinship care. The bill we passed last night again moves the ball forward by rewarding States for operating kinship guardianship programs as well as kinship navigator programs that help brothers and sisters stay connected should they enter the child welfare system.

Slowly but surely, we are learning what works—and we are learning it from States. Through innovative approaches like kinship care, we have dramatically reduced the number of children in foster care. In roughly a decade, the number of children in foster care has declined about 20 percent, and that's something to be proud of. But we must continue our goal of safely reducing the number of youth in care, while constantly asking ourselves, "what comes next?"

Earlier this year I introduced the Promoting Accountability and Excellence in Child Welfare Act, legislation that took a number of ideas from the States and from the advocates and from experts in Oregon and around the country for ways to improve the well-being of all vulnerable children and their families, just like we did last night. And one thing we can all agree on is that our Federal spending must drive positive outcomes. It is time we develop some consensus as to what those outcomes are, though. When we talk about child welfare, we typically

measure success in terms of reducing the number of days a child spends in foster care. But what about those children who never enter foster care but still are involved in the juvenile justice system? Or aren't attending class regularly? Or don't have access to health care? And what about the child that, for one unfortunate reason or another, spends the majority of her childhood in foster care and ages out of that system at age 18? How do we gauge whether we have lived up to our responsibility, as a society, of preparing that child for adulthood?

My bill gets at these very issues. It seeks to improve the well-being of all at risk children and their families by tracking outcomes on the individual level. Importantly, it asks States to be the pioneers by telling us what will work, and then proving it. If we don't check up on vulnerable kids until they are in foster care, or worse—until they are in the emergency room or in prison—we are missing opportunities not only to save the government money, but missing opportunities to save lives and preserve families. My bill also asks for a report to Congress on recommendations on how to update Federal foster care financing so that eligibility is no longer tied to the obsolete AFDC program.

When the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act passed out of the Finance Committee earlier this month, I withdrew two amendments to ensure its passage move quickly. And I was pleased to have the assurances of Chairman BAUCUS that we could work together to further explore this idea of child well-being through a roundtable in the Finance Committee as well as take the lead on a request to the GAO asking for policy options to modernize Federal child welfare financing. I commend the chairman and ranking member as well as congressional leadership for their hard work to ensure passage of this bipartisan bill and I look forward to continuing to work together to improve the lives of vulnerable children and their families.

#### TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, the job market these days is tough. I have heard from countless Rhode Islanders who have worked all their life, but who have lost their jobs and are now struggling to make ends meet. Sadly, many of these jobs have been lost because big companies are taking advantage of cheaper labor overseas.

We should take action to stop this pattern, and I have introduced legislation to end tax giveaways to companies that ship jobs overseas that I hope we will pass. In the meantime, we need to do everything we can to help those displaced workers get back on their feet.

Therefore, I am pleased that the Senate has acted to extend the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program for American workers who have lost their